

THE GRIDIRON'S GOLDEN GUERDON

ALL Other Heroes Pale Beside the Football Young Man.
Who Is Bountifully Favored by Fortune and Fair Women,
as Shown in the Case of Mr. Roddy Sloy



Roddy Flexed His Biceps, and all the Girls Felt.

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FOOTBALL produces street cleaning commissions, obituaries and survivors for millionaires' daughters to marry and for the millionaires to support. It is a profitable game to play all right when you get through with it if your system can stand the wear and tear of the gridiron. A football hero makes a real legitimate, sure enough history hero look like a trifle.

Alexander, for instance, sometimes called the Great, had his day; Napoleon had his twenty-four hours, Nelson (not Battling) his, Washington his, and even Corbett and Jeffries their, but not your Alexanders and Caesars, not your Napoleons and Nelsons, not your Washingtons and Deweys, nor even your Corbetts and Jeffries could eclipse the football hero of today. The others never come back. The football hero doesn't go anywhere so that he'll have to return. He just stays. Even "Jack" Johnson, in all his glory and vaudeville engagements, looks like a dark shadow compared to the real up to date pilskin pigeon, with turned up trousers and bristling pompadour. All these others had their flaws, their petty weaknesses, but put the football hero in his proper environment and the sun has to wear a smoked glass shield to shine on him.

But to let the story into the block, for this is intended to be a story, I never was a football player myself. I have a one cylinder back and a six cylinder intellect. I couldn't help that. I didn't draw the plans for my style of architecture. Well, all this was brought to my mind when I dropped in to see Sandy Ferguson the other day. Sandy and I used to spend a week every year back in New Haven trying to find out who was the best chess player in college. Now Sandy is running a couple of trusts and has a big board with the stock quotations nicely in laid on it in his office. He moves these around to suit himself and takes the other fellow's pawns, knights or rooks just as he fancies.

Sandy and I were pretty chum when we were in college. That is the only reason that I can get past phantasies of office boys, cohorts of clerks and private secretaries now and right into Sandy's private office. I slipped into Sandy's sanctum by the family entrance the other day after giving a secretary the "open sesame." When Sandy and I had passed the old grip I opened a desk drawer, pulled out a fifty cent cigar and assumed a nonchalant posture with my feet on top of a couple of hundred thousand dollars' worth of U. P. preferred, under which was a desk.

Concerning Mr. Roddy Sloy.

"Bill," said Sandy, "I saw Roddy Sloy the other day. You remember him?"

"He'll always be a scar on my memory," I replied. "He did me out of a great summer once. Took all the dimes."

"Football?" queried Sandy, who had evidently been up against it himself. "And you always were fond of a skirt, Bill," he added reflectively.

"Didn't I tell you that year?"

"Nope," said Sandy, as he answered the telephone and sold a few thousand shares of Standard Rubber. "I guess that will hold them for a while," he mused as he hung up the receiver. "Let her fly, Bill."

He pushed a buzzer and a boy bounded into the room, felled by enthusiasm for his art.

"All everybody who is waiting that I am engaged on important business and can't be seen this morning," directed Sandy. "Now, Bill, go to it and then we'll go out to lunch together. I've got a couple of good ones myself that I want you to hear."

I began. Here is the story I told Sandy. As all good stories have a title I might call this one "Why It Pays to Play Football." Peruse:

It was at Bathurst, on the coast of Maine, the last summer I was in college. That was the year that you worked your way to England on that cattle tub. You remember? You acted as a sort of chambermaid to a cow. Well, Roddy Sloy was at Bathurst also, and I might add likewise. You know he had the reputation for spreading more epidemics here and there on the gridirons of this country than any contemporary performer. Did I have a chance with the girls after he arrived? No. That was the time when I chanted my own song. Talk about the loquaciousness of an Arctic night. I'll lay a piece of change that the North Pole evening is as frivolous and festive as a Salome ball compared to my sojourn in Bathurst after his coming. I made the Sphinx look like a popular debutante at evening out party.

Well, to eliminate considerable that followed my arrival, I'll say that I was making some progress among the lingerie before he arrived. One day he breezed in on the noon train just after we all came back from the bathing beach. If I remember rightly I was with six or seven maidens at the time, telling them how I won the intercollegiate chess championship.

He billed his approach, and the advance publicity

work was fine. You know what he was for advertising in college. His baggage was on the porch. Embellished on the trunks was "Roderick Sloy, of Yale and Cohoes."

Effectively Labeled.

He didn't have such bad paper, though. Clinging coily to his baggage was a set of European labels that Oscar Hammerstein would be proud to support. They were almost as good as the set we bought in Hoboken in our sophomore year for two bits. You remember those?

Well, to skip over a lot more of the subsequent stuff, the baggage made as big a hit with the girls as Robert Edson or Harry Woodruff would had they been standing there. I was at the time walking with a very recherche summer resort clipping, Vera by name, one of the kind with an incandescent complexion and near silk hair. I was rather fond of her, and she fancied me. She caught sight of the conspicuous baggage. A blind girl would have noticed it.

"Elsie," she exclaimed to another, "Roddy Sloy is here. Ain't that grand?" Bidding up her hair.

"I heard he was coming, and I'm just crazy to see him. I'll bet he's so muscular," declared Elsie.

That was the end of me. I couldn't pry a single skirt loose from the hotel that afternoon, not even Alice Smith, who went to college and wore spectacles and thought that puffs made a girl look fast.

tion like telegraph poles along a railroad. And he was getting his stuff across.

"He's so delightfully rough and manly, too," exclaimed Vera, spontaneously, shifting her weight to her sound foot with a muffled groan. "See, he's smoking a pipe." I tried to induce her to remember the time that I had wanted to whiff on my French brier and she had told me to put the "horrid smelly thing away."

Roddy and the limping half dozen reached us.

"Oh, Vera," boasted Genevieve. "Mr. Sloy has been telling us all about how he was out getting a little practice for next season early this morning."

"Yes," interrupted Roddy, throwing out his chest at the imminent risk of his vest buttons and flicking an imaginary speck off his sleeve. He was sure enough determined not to lose the centre of the stage. "Yes, I took a little light practice. A friend of mine has an automobile up here. Clark's his name. His governor has a cottage. I got out into the road this morning and let him run into me going about twenty miles an hour. It's great for hardening a man up for the real knocks. I dented in the radiator, though, in the last rush that he made and came very near breaking up the machine. He says that he can't afford to have his car smashed that way. He has troubles enough with the telegraph poles. Heigh-ho, I suppose I'll have to find some new means to get into shape."

The half-dozen, plus Vera, exclaimed appreciatively in ultra-sopranoes. Roddy acknowledged the applause as a mere trifle and went on with the recital. As an encore he put on this one—

"Yes," he mused reminiscently, "I nearly killed a man once."

"Oh!" the chorus.

"Do you want to hear about it?"

got tan and smoked mulatto cigars. I guess he judged the outfit becoming.

Now, Sandy, you know I was never the man to quit. I began to apply to the situation my concentration derived from chess, and I had lots of time for thought during that next week. Roddy's popularity was unimpaired, and I hadn't a Mongolian's chance with the daughters of Eve. Finally I hit on a scheme to show him up. That was what I wanted. I smiled for the first time in a week. I didn't see how I could fail. I again pictured myself the Ward McAllister of Bathurst.

There used to be a big Swede back in Cos Cob, where I lived, who made his living going around to county fairs and betting the strong man that he could lift more. Then he used to go up to one of those machines where the proprietor wagers you that you can't hit a little round nob of leather with a sledge hard enough to ring a bell. After he had "broke" two or three of these outfits every year they would get on to him and shut down when they saw him coming. Olaf Oelson had about as many horse power as a one lung automobile.

He never did anything but loaf around the pool parlor and bet strangers that he could outlift them. They were the only ones who would go against him. I sent for him. I directed that he come into Bathurst on the night train and under cover of darkness. I met him at the station. I smiled at the chance that Sloy had when I saw Olaf for exercise after his long ride, playfully hoist one end of a loaded freight car off the track that was standing on a siding. I told him to put it down because I was afraid that he was going to carry it away with him, and it would have gummed my game if he had been pinched for grand larceny the first time.

more than half way across the room, I bought him some clothes and led him forth. He had become so well schooled in talking with his hands that any one who did not understand the sign language would certainly have considered him a chatterbox. I had carefully instructed him that he was not to begin work on Roddy's disintegration until he had received a certain signal from me.

The thing went along very smoothly and I was pleased with myself. Of course, I had to be a little careful at the table and keep passing things to Olaf so that his hands would be full and he wouldn't be tempted to after game off his beat. I kept him so busy eating that he did not have a chance to talk. If he had been so inclined, which he was not. For the rest I kept him away, explaining that on account of his affliction he was naturally sensitive. At intervals I told him things that Roddy had said about Sweden and Swedes until Olaf was for declaring war on the United States for harboring such a citizen.

Roddy had been very busy with the girls in the meantime, and especially was he exceedingly soiled with Vera. Bradstreet rated her father's fortune as the highest in the standing. I was content to let things rest for a few days.

Then one day at dinner, after Olaf had pointed out the vials of his selection on the menu, as was his custom, and I had ordered the whole layout to play it safe, a stranger sat down at the table. He was an oldish man with one of those skinned diamond effects on top and a pitiful, struggling bit of hair that reminded one for all the world of a grass outfield.

He soon scraped an acquaintance. After a brief conversation he asked me about my friend. I explained that he was my deaf and dumb cousin and that the only means of reaching him was through signs. A new light came into the little man's eyes, and he took off his gold rimmed glasses and polished them affectionately.

Expert in Sign Language.

"Wonderful!" he exclaimed. "I have made a study of the deaf and dumb all my life, and I am deeply interested in them. I have taught many and effected several cures. Great luck. What system does he use?"

Here was a swell fix. I had supposedly been carrying on an animated conversation with Olaf at intervals during the meal. At a loss for an answer, I replied:—

"The Morse code."

"How strange. I never heard of that," replied the professor. "Let me see what I can do."

He began to make motions at Olaf, to which the Swede paid no attention whatever. I saw that only a Napoleonic stroke could save the situation.

"I forgot," I answered hurriedly. "I am interested in telegraphy. You see, my cousin was born in Sweden and can only converse in the Swedish sign language. He doesn't understand any other."

"Ah," mused the professor, rubbing his hands at the prospect, "I'll soon teach him English. I'll soon teach him."

I led Olaf away from the table as soon as I could disengage him from the menu. I saw that I would have to strike and strike quickly. The situation was fogging facts. So the next morning when I found Olaf lifting an automobile out of a cow pasture where some joy riders had run it by mistake the night before and placing it back on the road I approached. This, Sandy, mind you, was the sort of exercise that he had taken every morning. One of his chief delights was to pull telegraph poles out by the roots.

I told Olaf that the time for action had come. I told him some more pleasant tales about Roddy Sloy calculated to stir up Olaf. Then I led my forces to the bathing beach where the enemy was holding forth. Many times I had warned everybody about the hotel that there was just one thing about which my cousin was sensitive. This was to have any one make motions when he was around because it made him feel that he was being made game of. I had told Sloy that if Olaf took offense at this he was about as gentle as a four-year-old lion. I pointed to his record. Only the timely intervention of the police, I told him, had saved one of Olaf's victims who had made this mistake. This, I said, was the only thing that bothered my poor deaf and dumb cousin, and that otherwise he was perfectly gentle.

Grand Climax.

When we arrived at the beach Roddy was telling a story about himself to the girls. He was one of those conversationalists who cannot talk if you tie their hands behind their back. I had noticed Roddy's weakness before I had mentioned Olaf's antipathy for motions. Roddy's hands were going like a Dutch windmill in a six knot breeze at the time I interrupted him. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Sloy," I began, "but I have



Mr. Sloy Carried Everything Before Him.

I tried bribery. I cajoled. But they didn't care for ice cream soda and were blasé when it came to candy.

They were all at hand at the roll call for dinner, however, dressed up like sore fingers. Now "Roddy" was not a bad stage manager. He had kept under cover all the afternoon. Not a glimpse of himself did he permit to escape, but he made his entrance for the evening performance with the salad. I had played a matinee to empty seats myself. He wore a dress suit that fitted as if it had been made to his measure. The coat left him at the collar and joined him again at the waist. He looked as lonesome as a bell buoy in it. He resembled for all the world a blacksmith who is badly out of focus.

With his coming there was a hush. He noticed it, too. I would have anticipated a safer passage with a yoke of oxen en route through a china emporium than with him through the dining room. But I was prejudiced. He only came a cropper on a waiter who was travelling light. There was no break in the silence until he seated himself and then the very evident tension snapped.

"Roddy Sloy, of Yale," whispered Vera in awe, nudging Genevieve. And back and forth and up and down the room there echoed in tense feminine tones—

"There's Roddy Sloy, the Yale full back."

Feminine Admiration.

"Ain't he grand?" queried Cynthia.

"Looks to me as if he might be a grand piano mover," I suggested with acerbity, and Cynthia responded by doing a close imitation of a refrigerator.

"He's so muscular," suggested Geraldine.

Mr. Sloy was located at the next table. He handled his trays in a rough and manly manner and at one time appeared to be in imminent peril of making a menu out of the front of his shirt. He made a great flying tackle of the fish, and when he finally scored a touchdown with the ice cream he called time. He had tired out one waiter.

Mr. Sloy opened next in the ball room, where the orchestra was beginning to unlimber preparatory to an evening of Tersiichorean entertainment. You remember, Sandy, how smooth I was with my my? Well, did I have a chance with that football playing gentleman?

The wall flowers answered "No." The girls clustered around him as if he were a bargain counter and after the first dance there was dress material enough to start a remnant sale. I didn't dance much that evening, but hung in the offing noticing that Mr. Sloy stepped on almost everything but the floor.

He went through the crowd as if he were carrying a mass play and expected somebody on the side lines to exclaim almost any minute, "No hope for Harvard." He handled his partner like a forward pass. And he got away with it, while I, generally acknowledged to be not only one of the best but one of the most graceful Tersiichorean artists extant, stood on the side lines like a fifth substitute at a football game. And I never could see that Donald Brian had anything on me, either. Mr. Sloy carried everything before him, not excepting the violinist on a turn around that worthy's end.

That broke up the dance when he hooked onto the fiddler. The next morning most of the girls were lame but game. I met Vera alone favoring her off leg perceptibly.

"Did you enjoy your dance last night?" I asked.

"Very much," she responded pluckily.

"Three more nights like that and you'll be on crutches."

Delightfully Rough.

Then the hero burst upon our view around the corner with six limping maidens in his wake. The "Is" was scattered through his conversa-

"Yes, of course," from the chorus.

"You see, it was against Princeton," Geraldine poked her elbow into my eye, trying to press closer to the lodestone. "That was two years ago, when I was playing in the line. I says to the guy across from me, 'If you try to come through here again I'll kill you.' And he didn't try. That's how he saved his life."

"Would you have been so cruel?" asked Genevieve.

"Sure. That's the game."

"No wonder that the accounts of the games and the obituary columns in the newspapers run parallel," I suggested.

The Man of Muscle.

"Huh, it's only the mollicoddlers that get hurt," he explained. "I'm hard, my boy, all over. Feel that!"

Roddy flexed his biceps, and all the girls felt. The exclamations expressive of admiration were as welcome to him as press notices to a chorus girl.

Mr. Sloy next led his personally conducted tour to the bathing beach. He appeared, apparently, prepared for immersion. Around him were all the assorted feminine bits of summer resort furniture. Again with great force it dawned on me why it pays to play football. The accomplishment is worth millions of dollars to the survivors in the summer. Eventually a varsity letter is almost sure to attract an heiress.

The football hero can afford to select. He doesn't need to accept any consolation prizes. Sloy began to show the girls some of his battle scars—goods in trade—and in his bathing suit he gave a very satisfactory demonstration.

"Notice my nose is crooked?" he asked. All the girls smiled affirmatively and sympathetically.

"I hadn't noticed it before," apologized Vera, "and it doesn't hurt your looks a bit."

"No," agreed Roddy readily.

"I couldn't," I said to myself.

"That's where John De Witt walked on my face," he went on glibly. "Feel it! The bones are all messed up."

And all the ladies stepped up and felt and looked pained and sympathized with the maimed hero. For my part, I wished that J. De Witt had worn horse shoes when he did the job. Next he pointed out a twisted leg.

"That," he explained easily, "I got caught in a scrimmage and had to wriggle out to make a touchdown. It was for the college, you know, and I only got torn ligaments and water on the knee. That's all, and it was worth it. When the game for alumni matter."

"Oh!" exclaimed the admiring and pulchritudinous chorus, and I could hear the thrills clatter up and down the listening vertebrae.

"That ain't nothin'," he went on, encouraged to continue his oratory. "You ought to see the other fellows. I carry a call for the coroner in either hand. They usually go off the field feet first when I get through with them."

Then he explained how he came by a string of medals that dangled from his chest.

Weighted with Medals.

"This one," he boasted, fondling a trophy that looked like one of the badges from a firemen's picnic, "I got for saving a man from drowning once."

"He ran and obtained help before the man sank," was my own opinion.

His narrative was as persistent as Tennyson's brook. Never once did he approach the water. I guessed that he hadn't mastered the science of self-buoyancy, but, anyway, if he had been an Annette Kellermann he couldn't have carried all those medals and stayed on top. He spent most of his mornings in his décolleté bathing suit. He lay on the beach,



Finally Roddy Got Up and Left the Swedish Head Stuck There.

I led him up to the hotel the back way. He had to tack to get his shoulders through the doors. I spent an hour just walking around and admiring him. I sat up all night giving him his instructions. He had always fancied me at home, probably because I was such a contrast to his own enormity. He was naturally a silent fellow, and I told him that he was to be my deaf and dumb cousin.

To Disassemble Roddy.

In exchange for his silence he was to get the best eating at the hotel and a purse as soon as he disassembled Roddy Sloy. He must pretend to talk with his hands, and above all things he was never to speak.

This was easy for him, as you had to call him three or four hard names ordinarily to get a word out of him. If he slipped up on any of the conditions there was to be no purse.

Just to add a little natural impetus to his dislike of Roddy Sloy I told Olaf that Roddy had said that Sweden wasn't a regular nation. Now, if there was one thing that Olaf was proud of it was his nationality.

"Show me dat fallah," he said, and I had hard work restraining him.

I held rehearsals for a week, in which period I kept Olaf under cover and tried to induce him to lead his food to his mouth with his fork instead of the tools which nature had given him. In that time I never let him talk, which, I repeat, was easy for him. Finally, when he became so finished an epicure that he only ate with his knife when he got excited or the meat was tough, and never spared bread with his fork

told you that my cousin is very sensitive about people making motions in his presence, and I will have to request you not to do it or you may get hurt. Even now he thinks that you are making game of him. Finally Roddy and Olaf looked as black as the main street in Yonkers after ten o'clock at night.

"I guess I can take care of myself," boasted Roddy. "Remember, Mr. Sloy, if anything happens, I have warned you."

Then I gave Olaf the office. He went for Sloy. I got my first surprise. He missed him. Sloy had been so well schooled in talking with his hands that any one who did not understand the sign language would certainly have considered him a chatterbox. I had carefully instructed him that he was not to begin work on Roddy's disintegration until he had received a certain signal from me.

The answer, Sandy. Well, I sent Olaf home by freight, and I left on the next train myself. And, by the way, what was Roddy Sloy doing when you saw him?

"Oh," replied Sandy, "he is devoting his life nobly to the task of spending his wife's money. He married your friend, you know, Vera Chivington Chase."

I answered, "You can't beat it!"